

EIS001937

Linda Nations  
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Via facsimile

Ms. Wendy R. Dixon, EIS Project Manager  
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office  
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management  
U.S. Department of Energy  
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**Reference: Draft Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for a Geologic Repository  
for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at  
Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada**

Dear Ms. Dixon,

Following are my comments on the referenced document as part of the public comment process. Possibly my comments are overdue. It was my understanding that the public comment period for the referenced document was open until February 28, 2000, but I have seen the deadline noted as February 9, 2000, as well.

1. My preference between the Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative is to select the No-Action Alternative.

2. It seems there has been a significant effort made to address very carefully delineated aspects of the project in the draft EIS for the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain. Certainly this document represents a great effort on the part of a large number of individuals. It does seem, however, that the scope of the site characterization, as represented in the draft EIS, has been framed such that certain potentially problematic aspects of the project have not been included. I am not referring to elements of need, timing, alternatives to isolating spent nuclear fuels and radioactive wastes in a repository, or alternative sites, as, under the Nuclear Waste Protection Act (NWPA), the Department of Energy (DOE) is not required to consider these aspects in the draft EIS.

I have two concerns regarding the issue of omissions. First, without explanation of the proper place or time where and when "the views and concerns not related to the scope or content of the Proposed Action," will be addressed, there is a danger in approving the document as it is currently proposed. It could appear that one unequivocally approves the project in entirety, when it's entirety is not actually presented. Granted, the document makes these exclusions clear, but it does not indicate or acknowledge their validity. Secondly, without explaining the reason for the omission of the elements of need, timing, alternatives to isolating spent nuclear fuels and radioactive wastes in a repository, or alternative sites, the public clearly is only providing comment on a portion of the proposed action. In light of these omissions, I can only recommend the No-Action Alternative.

- 3.... You may find it interesting to know that, recently, I became involved in an email dialogue with a person who represented himself as a technical advisor to a Yucca Mountain citizen's advisory group. I had posed a question about the transportation plan for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository to a professor of mine at UNLV. My professor forwarded my email to a group of persons, one of whom responded (the alleged technical advisor).

This person stated, "What the people of Nevada need to understand is that the repository is going to happen... If a study were to indicate potential problems with ground water contamination, the DOE would show how that study is not relevant... There is no study that has had any relevance or that could have relevance in the future... The schedule of Yucca Mountain is such that the project needs to move ahead..."

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3 cont. I found the tone and content of this, and several subsequent emails from this individual on this issue, disturbing. It suggests that the project is a done deal and that the public comment process/period is merely an annoying inconvenience that is consuming precious time from the schedule. It also suggests an attitude of paternalism by those on the inside.

This individual went on to claim that he knows so much more about all aspects of the project than I do that I couldn't possibly be enlightened via email. It was only after I revealed that I had worked at the former Nuclear Valve Division of Borg-Warner, Van Nuys, California, from 1976-1980, that this alleged technical advisor apologized for his belittling remarks and confrontational style. (The company manufactured parts and assemblies, including feed-water isolation valves, for nuclear applications. Clients included Three Mile Island, Hanford and the TVA, among others.)

His point seemed to be that the public lacks the knowledge to comprehend the significant points of the issue and that public comment serves only to delay the process.

4 In light of the controversy in Nevada regarding compensation for individuals who worked at the Nuclear Test Site, Nye County, Nevada, and who may have been exposed to radiation and/or toxic materials during the course of their work at the location, it is entirely appropriate for the public to have their concerns acknowledged. Assurances that every aspect of engineering, and environmental and biomedical safety has been addressed are not reassuring without also acknowledging that possible risks may not currently be known and that a process for addressing possible future damages is being included in the current planning.

With the contemporary examples of hearings addressing claims for compensation for surviving families and individuals affected by nuclear activities at sites such as Hanford, Washington and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, among others, it is clear that the process for handling dangerous materials is not adequate at this point in time. Nor is the process for admitting responsibility, identifying potentially responsible parties, and providing health care and/or compensation for those affected by unsafe practices adequate at this point in time.

It may not be appropriate to address these sorts of issues within the draft EIS, but without acknowledging them and identifying where and when these aspects of the project will be addressed, I cannot, in good conscience, affirm any but the No-Action Alternative.

5 When I read these draft EIS documents, and yours is among the easier examples to read, I cannot help but wonder at the difficulty those responsible for preparing these documents face. If the intent of the public comment process is to make the public aware of programs, then a clear outline is required, including some level of technical and engineering information. Your summary document was a helpful ancillary aid.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft EIS for the proposed repository.

Sincerely,



Linda Nations